

First Things First**Statement of commitment to Quality of Programming as a criterion for participation in funding opportunities for early care and education programs**

First Things First (FTF) supports both high-quality and improvement of quality in the development of an Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health system for children birth through age 5 and their families.

In alignment and support of this value, FTF funding which supports early care and education programming, children's attendance or the staff support of REWARD\$¹, will require that participating Early Care and Education programs (centers or homes) meet the following criteria²:

- Program provides early care and education services to children birth through age 5, and
- Program is regulated and in good standing with appropriate certifying, licensing or regulatory authority, and
- Program demonstrates a commitment to quality by one of the following:
 1. Is enrolled as a Quality First participant, actively working towards quality improvement, or
 2. Is accredited by one of the National Accreditations³ recognized also by ADE and DES, or
 3. Has applied for Quality First (improvement or rating, when available) and does not decline an opportunity to participate.

Notes:

1 The FTF strategy categories that must apply this policy include: child scholarships or stipends, program and facility improvement or expansion (if and when program is serving children), other quality, pre-k/Head Start, inclusion programming, or REWARD\$.

2 This criterion, which is intended to demonstrate a programs commitment to quality or quality improvement, is reflective of the developing Early Childhood System in Arizona. As such, FTF acknowledges that modifications to these requirements will be made as the opportunity for defining quality of programs evolves. For example, it is anticipated that a minimum required Star Rating will be used as the measure of quality in upcoming years.

3 Provider is accredited by one of the State of Arizona Board of Education approved accrediting bodies or by one of the bodies accepted by the Arizona Department of Economic Security to receive an enhanced reimbursement rate American Montessori Internationale; National Association for the Education of Young Children; The National Early Childhood Program Accreditation Commission; Association for Christian Schools International; American Montessori Society; National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education. For home-based child care: National Family Child Care Association; Council for Professional Development

First Things First (or the grantee/administrative home) will have responsibility for communicating these requirements to participants, and for monitoring and verifying that early childhood programs meet the requirements. Other Quality Improvement Initiatives may also qualify in place of participation in Quality First. Please contact FTF for more information on this policy as needed.